

**THE MINUTES  
OF THE  
WARRANT COMMITTEE MEETING  
APRIL 9, 2003**

Vice Chairman White called the meeting to order at 7:36 PM.

Members absent: M. Widmer, L. Oates, and W. Flewelling

Also present: Town Administrator Kleckner, Selectman Anne Marie Mahoney, Selectman Paul Solomon, Town Accountant Barbara Hagg, Town Treasurer Susan Kendall Freiner, School Committee and Capital Budget Committee member Scott Stratford, Water Superintendent Gerard Schultz, and Assistant Water Superintendent Michael Bishop

*Handout(s) given out tonight:*

1. *The detailed FY04 Requested Budget handed out by Town Accountant Hagg*
2. *MWRA local pipeline rehabilitation program loan handed out by Water Superintendent Schultz*

***Water Department MWRA Discussion***

Vice Chairman White introduced Water Superintendent Gerry Schultz to discuss the Water Main Replacement Program. He gave some background on the topic and passed out (*Handout 2*) the MWRA local pipeline rehabilitation program loan utilization analysis. Payments begin the fiscal year after we borrow the money. The MWRA loan program would last for a period of 10 years with a possible recapture program to go back two or three years. Columns 5 and 6 of *Handout 2* are only estimates because we never really know what the bid prices are going to be since engineering estimates are one thing; actual costs are another. The Water Board is looking for authorization to borrow. Projects cannot be bid upon until they have the actual appropriation in hand. Mr. Schultz spoke of the possible timing of this issue. The bid could go out in early February 2004 with the project starting on April 1, 2004 (contingent upon weather conditions). The Water Department's projects tend to be neighborhood projects. There were a couple of individual streets already done due to dire need, but the project would focus on neighborhood areas that moves along in a logical direction.

Assistant Superintendent Bishop presented a map of Belmont's distribution projects with the "completed," "designed," and the "to be completed" areas mapped out. He pointed out there are a lot of "to be completed" areas on the map. Mr. Bishop reinforced the Water Department could focus on entire neighborhoods at a time. Mr. Schultz mentioned *Handout 2* is a rate neutral report –calculations include no increase in rates.

Mr. Schultz said the Water Department needs almost a full year lead-time to design an area. They are not looking to go into streets that were recently paved, such as Oxford Avenue. Selectman Brownsberger mentioned the priorities are very different between

pipe problems and road problems. He added the Board of Selectmen determined we want to prioritize our road projects to keep the highest trafficked roads in good condition first.

Mr. Schultz mentioned that these costs include a permanent trench patch. With this added funding, we could really jump out ahead and design four or five projects, find out when an area is going to be paved, and we could come in ready to coordinate the project with the road project with Community Development.

Vice Chairman White pointed out this allows the Water Department to lay pipe sooner. Mr. Schultz added the benefits associated with this: unit costs do go down as volume goes up, and improving the hydraulic nature of the system. In looking at 10-year blocks, we will see a steady decrease in terms of personal hours required to deal with emergencies. In the business world, there is about a 3% inflation rate, and we would be that much ahead of it. We are fortunate that contractors want to continue to work in Belmont, and we do get competitive prices from contractors.

Member Curtis asked if there was any issue in the second decade of this in terms of total capital. Mr. Schultz answered that we would be addressing problems earlier. He added that unless we get into major inflation, \$236K a year allows you to do a “good half-mile a year.”

Member McCormick asked who is responsible for coordinating the paving streets and the insulation of the water pipes in order to get the biggest “bang for the buck.” Mr. Schultz said he works with Community Development. He gave Pleasant Street as an example. Mr. Bishop added the Water Department does work closely with Community Development on their Pavement Management Program. In prior years, we would put aside X amount of dollars for an overlay (1½” topcoat), but that is not always the best route to take. Some streets would warrant that application, but it could cause drainage problems in other streets. The Water Department has gone back and put in a permanent trench patch for those areas.

Member Schafer asked how this loan would interface with the rest of the borrowing. The Committee discussed the type of borrowing. In terms of borrowing, Treasurer Freiner added that zero interest money is always a good thing. If there were a plan on how to spend it, Treasurer Freiner would have a hard time objecting to borrowing the money. It is real debt even though it is not a bond issue. Treasurer Freiner will come back to the Warrant Committee after she meets with the Water Board to discuss this further.

Selectman Brownsberger recalled this was discussed at a previous meeting – that in the second decade of the program, there would be costs. Mr. Schultz said about 2/3 of the MWRA communities have taken advantage of this loan program thus far.

Member Kobus observed that when the work is completed, she does not think we have accomplished that much in taking on this “real debt.” She does not see how the costs measure up to the benefits. What risks are we at if we do not use this loan to get our work increased 5% ahead of schedule? Mr. Schultz reiterated columns 5 and 6 are really

estimates. He does not really see there is much risk from a business point of view. He cannot say this project will be done 10 years early, nor one to two years early. He does not think we would be at risk if we do not do this program. He added that this is the last year we are paying back their 1998 loan from the MWRA, so there is already \$50K “in the kitty” already.

Member Schafer shares concerns as to how much we can efficiently spend in one year. She is wondering where the “sooner” part of the project comes into play. Mr. Schultz said the \$421K could be appropriated in FY04, to be spent in FY05. Member Schafer pointed out the Water Department would still be bidding it in two projects, since they would only have the \$421K appropriated. She asked how much “unspent capital” does the Water Department have right now? Town Accountant Hagg responded that since the money is only closed out once a year to Retained Earnings, the money would then have to be appropriated out of Retained Earnings to be spent.

Member Brusch pointed out this only appears to cut one year from the program. Vice Chairman White sees the Warrant Committee struggling with how this is advantageous in the end for the Town. He thinks the Committee has exhausted this issue now. He asked Mr. Schultz to give the Warrant Committee the advantages of the loan program in writing. Mr. Schultz admitted that Water Commissioner Kobayashi has a better grasp on the advantages, and he will ask him to complete this task.

### ***Acceptance of Minutes***

The Committee discussed and the minutes of the April 2, 2003 meeting.

- *Member McCormick made a motion, Member Heigham seconded said motion, and the Committee unanimously voted to accept the minutes as amended of April 2, 2003.*

### ***FY04 Budget Changes from Town Administrator Kleckner***

Selectman Brownsberger updated the Warrant Committee on the Board of Selectmen’s final recommendations regarding the FY04 Budget process. The Board of Selectmen discussed the sequence to Town Meeting: the host of non and non-major money Warrant Articles would be discussed on April 28<sup>th</sup>, 30<sup>th</sup>, May 5<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup>. The major money items would be postponed as late as possible. Those dates would probably be June 16<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> (Monday-Wednesday). **The Mega Meeting has been changed to Monday, May 19<sup>th</sup>** at the Selectmen’s Meeting Room.

Town Administrator Kleckner referenced Handout 6 from the April 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting. He said there are \$5K of reductions that were not distributed yet - \$2,500 in In-State Travel and \$2,500 in Travel Allowance from various departments’ accounts. Vice Chairman White allowed the Subcommittees to review any questions with Town Administrator Kleckner regarding reductions and funding.

### *Public Services*

Member Hofmann clarified with Town Administrator Kleckner there will be one net reduction in the Cemetery Department.

Member Brusch has a concern with the Contractual Services Account #1-6401.6 (*Handout 1 page 44*) being reduced in Buildings and Grounds. The \$9K reduction is on top of the \$13K originally lowered. This is \$21K less than this year. Her concern is that this may be too strong of a cut considering they are coming back for a Reserve Fund Transfer very soon for this year and in prior years. Member Kobus thought if the Recreation Department could increase their fees enough to cover some pool costs, then that could restore \$2K in Buildings and Grounds.

Member Brusch is also concerned about accounts Playground Equipment in Grounds and Professional Services for Community Development (and that in General Government). These accounts are well spent every year, and reducing them may cause a problem.

### *General Government*

Member Morley agrees with Member Brusch on Consultant Services. She suggested some funding be restored to the prior year's level. Member Heigham added his concern was if there was an extra election, then the money would have to come from the Reserve Fund, even though that is the normal procedure when an extra election occurs.

### *Public Safety*

Member Brusch does not agree with cuts in conference spending, but if that is where the Town Administrator would like to cut, then she will not fight him on it. In the Fire Department, Member Brusch asked for clarification on the funded position for Training/Plans Review. She remarked that a year ago, the Fire Chief picked the training position, but the Warrant Committee was pushing plans review. Her concern is for the Town Hall Complex plans to be thoroughly reviewed.

Member Curtis clarified with Vice Chairman White the Cruiser Replacement account in the Police Department involved two vehicles. Selectman Brownsberger and Town Administrator Kleckner discussed the proceeds of vehicle sales would go into the General Fund. Vice Chairman White asked Town Administrator Kleckner the progress on the vehicle audit. Town Administrator Kleckner said the audit is broken in two parts: use of vehicles and the number of vehicles. The Committee briefly discussed the Police Department's vehicles.

### *Education*

Member Schafer (*Handout 1 page 29*) clarified the Total Education line is the in-town schools and Grand Total includes Minuteman. The Subcommittee decided that due to the flux, the entire Subcommittee is prepared to say they support the \$29,615 (amount discussed on their Saturday budget meeting). Some of the members support an additional amount of money. She mentioned there might be a need for more kindergarten teachers due to an increase from estimated amount of children enrolled for September. The Subcommittee sees no need vote a firm dollar amount stand right now, due to the flux in

the State budget uncertainty. Member Miller added that if enough people switch from the PPO to the HMO, then the Schools could make up \$40K with only 10 changes. Member Schafer said there are some scenarios the assessment might be \$200K greater than budgeted (in the assessment prior to the Governor's budget).

### *Human Services*

Vice Chairman White asked Member McCormick to discuss any issues regarding the Library and the Library's budget issues. Member McCormick updated the Committee on the branch libraries and adding a branch in the new Senior Center. The Board of Library Trustees has indicated to the Board of Selectmen they oppose moving the Waverley Branch to the building that would be created on the Kendall site. The Trustees have indicated, at least for the current future, that the branches are part of the picture.

Selectman Solomon was under the impression the Trustees did support a branch put into the Kendall building. Member McCormick said the Trustees, in their letter to the Board of Selectmen, did not come out to support the branch at the Kendall building. Selectman Mahoney said that it was unclear because she as well thought the Trustees supported the Kendall branch idea.

Member Heigham re-expressed the concern that the Committee is getting too deep into the minutary. For the Committee to be quibbling over items under \$10K is a "waste of time."

Member Bruschi is sold on the fact the Town does not have what they should have on computer expertise. This issue was brought up a few years ago by Mark Clark. This is something the Warrant Committee should be looking at that cannot wait another year. Selectman Solomon agrees. Member Bruschi would like the Warrant Committee to have a copy of the ITAC report. (It is on the Town's website.) Town Accountant Hagg would make a copy of the presentation and add it to the Committee's packet for next week. Member Tillotson is concerned with the security issue regarding the Town's network.

Member Morley pointed out the Town Clerk's office would benefit greatly and have significant improvements with their department if the Town had more expertise in the IT area.

### ***Executive Session - Salaries of Elected Officials***

With 14 members present, the Warrant Committee took a unanimous roll call vote to adjourn the regular meeting and enter into Executive Session at 9:23 PM to discuss the salaries of elected officials. The Committee will not resume regular session after this discussion.

- *Member Heigham made a motion, Member Hofmann seconded said motion, and the Committee unanimously voted to enter into Executive Session for the purpose of discussing elected officials salaries.*

Respectfully submitted,

Kristina E. Frizzell

Recording Clerk